



Lesson 8

Define the Organization's Mission

Introduction

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you probably won’t get there” is an oft-quoted, statement attributed to the great Yogi Berra. Though, intended originally for an individual, it relates to organizations as well. Every organization, and the people who comprise it, must have a sense of the purpose and intentions of the organization. “Where are we going, and how will we get there?” are questions often asked in organizations. Additionally, the people in the organization need to know the right way to act, what’s important, and many other “values” that leadership expects to be carried out in the “new” organization.

The Department of the Navy uses “mission statements” to establish the organization’s purpose and “business sense”. This lesson explains the development of the **Mission Statement**. The development of a **Quality Philosophy** and its importance to establishing the foundations of a new culture in the emerging organization will be discussed in the next lesson. These two statements together go a long way towards “Defining the Organization”.

Objectives

Upon completion of part one of this lesson the student will be able to:

- Describe the importance of a mission statement in implementing Total Quality Leadership
- Identify criteria for an effective mission statement
- Describe the process for developing an effective mission statement
- Develop a mission statement in a group setting

“Too many firms have trivial, meaningless “mission statements” and other supposedly inspiring documents that say nothing.”

K. Albrecht (Northbound Train, Amacom, 1994)

Why Create A Mission Statement?

The Department of the Navy has adopted the strategy of quality through the continuous improvement of products and services as perceived by the customer. In short, to effectively manage the creation of customer value and thus improve mission performance, organizational leaders must create a mission statement. A well written mission statement allows the leaders to align the efforts of everyone in the organization, to prioritize the allocation of resources, and to focus the continuous process improvement efforts on the most important processes. In order to write a mission statement the leaders must answer some fundamental questions relating to the **current** status of those organizations such as:

- **What do we do?**
- **Whom do we do it for?**
- **How do we do it?**

The process of developing a mission statement helps the organization's leaders affirm and agree on the answers to these critical questions. That agreement is important and usually good learning. The "what is our purpose?" focus that is needed, starts with the development of the mission statement.

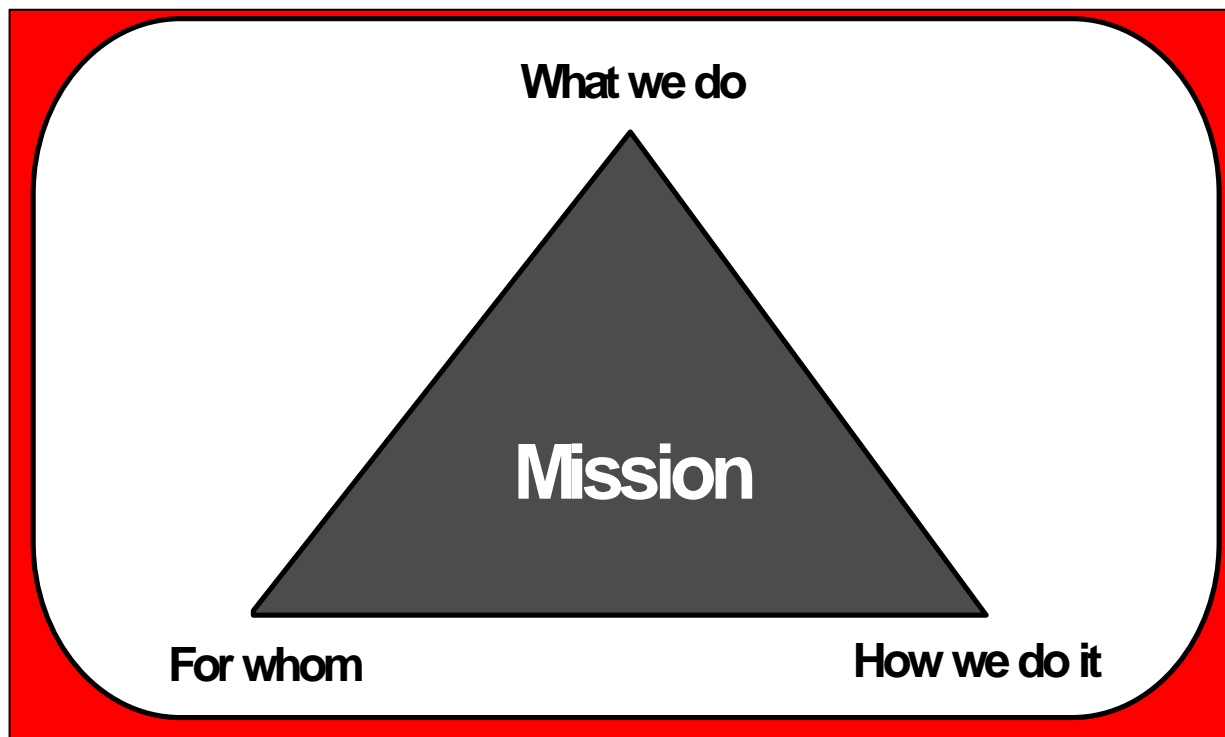


Figure 8.1 Essential elements of an effective mission statement

A Mission Statement

The use of the term **mission** does cause some confusion because it has so many meanings. The World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary (1994) includes ten different definitions for mission, three of which are decidedly military in nature.

In the United States Marine Corps, a mission statement is a clear and concise five part statement of the tasks to be accomplished (What), by which command (Who), the time in which it should be accomplished (When) place (Where) and if necessary the purpose of the operation (Why)

The Navy has a similar tasking scheme used in OPORDERS and communication messages.

Though there are some meanings of the term mission that are uniquely military in nature, mission as it is used in the context of Total Quality Leadership has a specific meaning and purpose. When it is properly developed and articulated it should distinguish an organization from others of its type, and should identify the scope of its operations. It describes what the organization is chartered to do, who is to benefit from its existence, and provides guidelines for doing business. **The mission statement is primarily used to orient the efforts and actions of all organizational members.** In theory, mission statements work to ensure that necessary actions take place in a timely manner, that customer needs are met, and that vertical alignment and horizontal coordination occur.

Many organizations already have a mission statement dictated by executive order, law, instruction, or some other formal document. However, some activity and command missions have changed a great deal without a concurrent, clear statement reflecting those changes. According to David Osborne, in his book *Reinventing Government*, “governments tend to load several different--and often conflicting--missions on each agency as the years go by.”

A great many mission statements are **unclear** about who the **customers** are and how the organization adds value to them. Existing mission statements may need to be re-examined to determine if the organization is fulfilling its tasking. In some cases, revisiting existing mission statements will help get the organization back on track--to serving their external customers. Other existing mission statements might have to be changed, because they may be outdated due to reorganizations or emerging requirements.

If there's no higher-level mission

The question frequently arises “How can we be expected to develop our own guidance when those with authority over us haven't taken the time to clarify their mission and what they expect of us?” Ideally, for optimization and alignment, organizations should

have guidance from their Immediate Superior in Command (ISIC). If they don't, they need to put a stake in the ground based upon whatever guidance they do have. They can still influence the quality of their mission related products and services by having the organization focused and aligned through a mission statement of their own creation.

A Naval Air Station realized when writing a mission statement that they were focused on providing a product they didn't own (pilots and jets). They came to the realization they were really providing support services to the assigned squadrons, and it was the squadrons that actually provided the pilots and jets.

A Naval Oceanographic Processing Facility used the mission re-examination process to discover new customers for its technology that was in decreasing demand in the Department of the Navy. It now uses its technology to support other agencies such as the DEA and performs tasks of an ecological nature that support the DoN's evolving mission and goals.

Criteria for Effective Mission Statements

Some criteria of good mission statements follow:

- 1. The statement is clear and understandable to all who read it.**
- 2. The statement is brief enough for most people to remember.**
- 3. The statement specifies clearly the business the organization is in, including statement(s) identifying:**
 - the organization's primary customers, and their wants and needs;**
 - products and services delivered to those customers to meet those wants and needs;**
 - how primary technologies are employed to execute the mission.**
- 4. The statement identifies what distinguishes the organization from others that provide the same products or services.**
- 5. The statement is not so broad as to permit loss of focus by organizational members.**

These criteria can be used by the ESC to evaluate sample mission statements as preparation for developing their own.

How to Write a Mission Statement

Drafting a valid mission statement requires synthesis and analysis thinking, judgment, patience, perseverance, and intuition. This is typically best accomplished in uninterrupted planning sessions. The following are the steps....

1. Gather and review pertinent information relative to a Mission statement

a. Existing documents which describe or define the business of the organization, including:

- ø Function statements
- ø Required Operational Capabilities (ROC) documents
- ø Stakeholder/ISIC or other Mission, Vision and Guiding Principle info
- ø Prior Mission statements

b. Organizational assessment outcomes, including:

- ø Customer feedback on performance
- ø Any documentation on products and services currently provided and to whom (Valid **quality data** is important here)
- ø Any interview data gathered from the planning team
- ø Assessments that may have been conducted (Internal/External)
- ø Studies that may have been conducted which may be useful (i.e. Demographic studies, Economic impact studies, etc.)
- ø Observed use of your product and services by customers (if avail.)

Note: It is usually better for the ESC to review and discuss the above items prior to the actual mission writing session. The TQL coordinator can assist by arranging for some training sessions.

Now it is time to assemble the critical elements that comprise an effective mission statement that are depicted in Figure 8.1. It is normally best to begin with customers first. This will answer the question of “For whom” we do it.

2. Identify the organization’s external customers

a. **Ask the team members to think about the organization** and the information they gathered in step 1; have them list the **external** customers of the organization.

Note: There are several brainstorming methods. Use the method that best fits your team but **insist on the use of post it notes because you will be grouping these inputs later.**

b. **Work towards clarity of the information provided.** Go through a process of clarifying the inputs to ensure that all members understand the idea. **Do Not**

combine or consolidate the ideas. That will occur naturally during the grouping process.

c. Ask the team to validate that all inputs are indeed external and not internal customers. If all members agree that an idea is internal, it should be removed from the board. If all members cannot agree, be prepared to conduct some brief just-in-time training on internal/external status. If there is still disagreement, leave the idea on the board and it will probably stand alone after the grouping process.

d. Group the customers by asking them to examine the suggested customers represented on the board, and placing them together in groups on the basis of how they could be alike. Caution the team to not get caught in the trap of trying to group the ideas on the basis of how they are not alike. That's a mental trap that does not work well during this process. **Focus on how the ideas could be alike** (More detailed information about this process is included in the *Methods for Managing Quality* course).

Note: A general observation is that teams tend to group items on the basis of the words without closely examining the real meaning of the idea. That's categorizing and not grouping. Caution the team against doing this.

e. Create headings for the groupings. The "header" cards for the customer groupings should be specific and not vague statements (i.e.. "Outside people", or "All active duty".)

You have now completed the customer groupings. The next step is to follow a similar process for the Products/Services the organization provides to these customers.

3. Brainstorm the organization's Products and/or Services provided to the customers listed above.

a. Instruct the team to take a moment to reflect on the groups and individual customers displayed on the board. Have them brainstorm all the products and/or services they provide to those customers.

b. Clarify the ideas. Go through a process of clarifying the inputs with the group to ensure they understand all the ideas. If not, ask the submitting person to clarify for the group. Sometimes teams get hung up on the semantics of the terms *process* and *product*. For example, "educate and train" (process) produces "knowledgeable and skilled students" -- not "training" -- as a product. Help to ensure they are clear about processes (actions/verbs) and products/services (outputs/nouns). Do not combine or cancel, that will happen as a result of the grouping process.

c. Group the ideas. Use the same process as discussed in step 2 above.

d. Create header cards for the groups following the same procedure as used above in step 2.

4. Determine how the organization provides those products or services.

Focus on the method. Identify the specific action or series of steps that best explains how the organization does what it does. Do this for each of the products and/or services listed in step three.

A “Customers, Products, and Processes Matrix” can help assemble and organize the data for your mission statement. List the customers on the left side of the matrix as shown in Figure 8.2. Next identify the major **products and services** provided to these customers and list them across the top of the matrix.

The cells of the matrix should be completed last -- that is, after customers and products/services have been identified. The ESC should ask themselves, “By what method do we provide this product or service to that customer. This seems to help the planning team focus on ***processes, rather than functions***. The cells will identify the significant processes within the organization. In most cases, there should be only a few, and they should indicate cross-functional areas within the organization. Figure 8.2 below, is an example of a completed “Customers, Products, and Processes Matrix” for an actual DoN organization whose mission is: **To provide technical information and training to ships, other naval commands, and other governmental agencies.**

	Products/Service		
	Data	Education Awareness	Technical Support
Customers	Processes		
Fleet	Collect and Report	Provide Training	Consult on-site
Other Navy Commands	Collect and Report	—	Consult on-site
Other Agencies	Collect and Report	—	Consult on-site

Figure 8.2 Customers, Products, Processes Matrix

This matrix is a visual representation of a mission statement. Thus the final step in validating the mission is to compare the elements within the matrix to the written mission statement.

5. Create the Mission Statement

Begin by stating the name of the organization (i.e. We are the Personnel Support Detachment, Great Lakes, or The USS Enterprise, etc.); then create a statement that indicates the “What you do” (Products and Services), the “for whom” elements (Customers), then “how it is done.”

Note: As mentioned before, a mission statement provides focus and orientation to the organization. It is not necessary to fill it with lots of buzzwords and TQL jargon. Remember, also this is the first cut. The mission statement should undergo a sanity check in accordance with the criteria listed above, and modified as necessary.

With the development of a mission statement, the first piece of your defining statements for your organization is in place. The actions you take to improve mission performance will begin to upset the status-quo. Interruption to the prevailing culture will also begin to occur. It is now time to create the second defining statement, your “Quality Philosophy.”

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Summary

- A mission statement is a broad but enduring statement of purpose which describes what the organization does, who it does it for, and how it does it.
- Development of the Mission statement helps the organizational leaders begin the practice of focused improvement of performance.
- Every organization needs to examine and agree on its mission.
- The mission statement constitutes one of the two important statements organizations use to define their purpose.

Readings

Albrecht, K. *The Northbound Train* Amacom 1994

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Pearce and David *Corporate Mission Statements: The Bottom Line* Academy of Management Executive 1987, Vol. 1, No. 2 PP 109-116